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ARCHAIC INDIAN TERRACOTTAS

With 51 figures on 7 plates

By ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, Boston, U. S. A.

Within the last twenty years Indian terracottas of early date have been found at numerous sites[1]). In the present article it is proposed to describe a considerable and important series now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 1—13, 15, 17—24, 26, 27, 30—35, and 39—45) together with a few others. All those in the Museum collection, except where otherwise indicated (fig. 1—4), are stated to have come from Mathurā; and though nothing is known about their actual find-place and associations, it is very probable that they have been found in that district. Fig. 46, in my posession, is said to have been found at Kanauj. Figs. 25, 28, 50 are from Bāsāṛh; fig. 29 from Kosām; figs. 14, 16, 51 from Pāṭaliputra. The Museum collection and other unpublished examples available to me include many of high antiquity, others of Maurya and Śuṅga date, and others still later, Kuṣāna, Gupta and mediaeval. Here only those which can confidently be dated before 100 B. C. will be considered; and even of these only those Maurya and Śuṅga examples will be included which are closely related to the older series on the one hand, or to the earliest stone sculptures (figs. 37, 47—49) on the other. Only divine and human or semi-human types will be discussed, omitting for the present all reference to those of animals. All the illustrations of terracottas are approximately of the size of the originals. All are figurines or plaques, except fig. 8, which is a fragment of a vessel, perhaps the base of the handle.

INDUS VALLEY TERRACOTTAS

The oldest known Indian terracottas about which any exact information is available are those found on the "Indus Valley Culture" chalcolithic sites at Mohenjo-Daro in the Sind valley and Harappa in the Panjab. These will be published in due course by the Archaeological Survey of India, by whom they have been excavated[2]).

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[1]) Taxila, Cunningham, A. S. Reports, vol. xiv, pl. ix; A. S. I., A. R., 1919—20, pl. xi and 1920—21, pl. xvi. — Saṅkīsa, Cunningham, ib., vol. xi, p. 29 and pl. ix. — Bhīṭā, Marshall, in A. S. I., A. R., 1911—12, pl. xxii. — Basāṛh, Bloch, Th., Excavations at Basarh, A. S. I., A. R., 1903—04, pl. xxxix 16; Spooner, D.B. in A.S.I., A.R., 1913—14, pls. xliii—xlv.—Besnagar, Bhandarkar, D.R., in A.S.I., A. R., 1913—14. — Nagarī, Bhandarkar, Mem. A. S. I., No. 4, 1920. — Kosām, Banerji, in A. S. I.; A. R., 1913—14, pl. lxx, c. — Pāṭaliputra, in A. S. I., A. R., 1915—16, Pt. I, p. 14 and ib. 1917—18d Pt. I, p. 27 and pl. xvi. Terracottas from various sites are also illustrated in my History of Indian an, Indonesian Art ("H. I. I. A.") (English or German edition, 1927).

I have given a preliminary account of some of the Boston terracottas in the Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, No. 152. Since the present article was written, M. A. Salmony (Statuettes indiennes en terre cuite de haute époque, Rev. des Arts Asiatiques, V, 1928, pp. 98f.) has published a series of nine early Indian terracottas belonging to Messrs Heeramaneck, New York; his Fig. 1 belongs to my Group I; his Figs. 2—6 to my Group II; his Figs. 7, 9, to my group III, fig. 44. M. Salmony thinks that my dating of Group II may be a little too early. Some other examples have since been acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

[2]) Some have been published by Sir John Marshall in the Illustrated London News, Sept. 20

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These "Indus Valley" terracottas may be dated roughly in the second or third millennium B. C. The following generalisations are based on seven examples from Harappa, all but one being female. The peculiarities are numbered for convenient reference:

(1) The nose is prominent, and formed by pinching the clay together, so that it forms a projection continuous with the forehead, (2) the eyes are large and round, and separately affixed, (3) the lips are thick, and separately affixed, (4) earrings are worn, but are not very large, (5) in some cases there is a choker-like necklace, (6) the female figures wear a broad girdle, but are otherwise nude, (7) the navel is generally indicated, (8) the mount of Venus is not conspicuous, (9) the breasts are not large, but are separately affixed. There are three kinds of headdress, (10) fan-shaped, (11) or with smooth lateral projections like horns, which, (12) in one case are spirally twisted, forming a volute. The arms are (13) held at the sides, or (14) in one example raised to the head, and (15) in another the left arm is bent to support a child at the breast.

Of these features, 1 and 3 are highly characteristic of Sumerian types, 5, 7, 11 are not uncommon in Sumerian examples, 6, 11, 13 are typically Indian, 8 is neither Mesopotamian nor Indian, and the remainder call for no special comment. Some peculiarities are of little significance; the various positions of the arms, for example, would be apt to occur anywhere, I am far from being a monogenist, and am more inclined to believe that obvious and easily conceived forms are spontaneous, than to suppose them derived by migration from some one place where they were first invented. But true peculiarities, whether of technique or costume or otherwise, are often signs of cognate relationship, contemporaneity, or in some cases of derivation.

Group I

A TERRACOTTA FROM PESHĀWAR AND RELATED TYPES

The very interesting female type illustrated in fig. 1 and 2 is positively stated by the dealer from whom it was obtained to have been found in the Peshāwar district. With it were shown two incomplete examples (figs. 3, 4). In the perfect example illustrated, back and front (figs. 1, 2), the following peculiarities may be noted:

(1) The nose is prominent, and formed by pinching the clay together, so that it forms a projection continuous with the forehead, as in the Harappa and early Sumerian types, (2) the eyes are narrow, and formed by separately affixing the two lids, (3) the mouth is small and inconspicuous, the lips, however, separately affixed, (4) two lenticular earrings of moderate size are worn in each ear, (5) the hair hangs down the back in long braids, and seems also to hang down to the shoulders beside the ears in front, (6) at least four necklaces are worn, the two upper like a choker round the neck, (7) the breasts are small and separately affixed, (8) the navel is not indicated, (9) there is a girdle on the hips, and

and Oct. 4, 1924, Febr. 27, 1926, and Jan. 14, 1928; and in A. S. I., A. R., 1923—24, pl. xxi, and 1924—25, pls. xxii, xxvii. See also Codrington, Ancient India, fig. 3.

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(10) immediately below it the mount of Venus and the sex are clearly indicated, but there is no representation of pubic hair, (11) the separating of the legs is indicated only by an incised line, (the two legs together taper almost to a point), (12) anklets are represented, (13) the arms are horizontally extended, ending in points, without indication of hands[1]), (15) the headdress is apparently turreted, with (16) on one side, originally probably on each side, a rosette separately affixed. Finally (17) there is worn a jewel consisting of a double chain fastened in front below the breasts by a perforated boss, passing over the hips, and again fastened at the back by another boss, with two smaller bosses on the shoulders. The type is markedly steatopygous. The material is a fine smooth red terracotta.

Particular attention may be called to the jewelled chain, no. 17 in the above list. This is a most characteristically Indian ornament, known as a channavīra[2]); it occurs already on one of the very oldest Indian sculptures in stone, the Besnagar Yakṣī[3]), again at Bharhut[4]), Sirkap[5]) and in later Indian art generally[6]). Amongst other peculiarities conspicuously, if not quite exclusively Indian, may be mentioned the girdle, the anklets, the rosette on the headdress, and the fact that there is no indication of hair on the pubic triangle. The peculiar formation of the nose is characteristic alike of Indus Valley terracottas from Harappa and of ancient Chaldean and Elamite types[7]). But the Harappa terracottas have round eyes, like those of the earliest Mesopotamian forms[8]); and clumsy thick-lipped mouths rather like the eyes of the Peshāwar figure. The pointed horizontal arms appear unique[9]). Thus, to sum up, there is a markedly Indian character about the whole figure, and there need be no hesitation in crediting its Indian provenance. Technically and stylistically there are relationships equally with various European neolithic, ancient Mesopotamian, other Indus Valley, and later but still pre-Mauryan Indian types; but while nearly all the peculiarities are present elsewhere, the type is unique in its particular combination of them. Certainly older than the next group to be discussed, and

[1]) Perhaps the points of the short arms are elbows, the arms being supposed to be folded over the breast.

[2]) Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, I, p. xxxi.

[3]) H. I. I. A., fig. 8.

[4]) Cunningham, Stupa of Bharhut, Pl. XXXVI, fig. 8 (r. h. figure; a better photograph shows the channavīra much more clearly).

[5]) A. S. I., A. R., 1919—20, p. 20. Here, fig. 48.

[6]) It is just possible that the same ornament is intended to be represented on a very crude early piece from Susa (Conteneau, La Déesse nue babylonienne, 1914, fig. 61); cf. also Cambridge Early History, Volume of Plates I, 70. This ornament may have been one of the many forms common to Mesopotamia and India. The form certainly occurs with other Indian elements in Alexandrian art about the beginning of the Christian era (Berstl, Indo-koptische Kunst, Jahrb. asiat. Kunst, I, 1926, Tafel 103, Abb. 2 and de Villard, La scultura ad Ahnās fig. 66).

[7]) Conteneau, pp. 53, 54, 60, 61. Cf. Hoernes-Menghin, Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa, pp. 319, 361.

[8]) Conteneau, ib., figs 43—45, and 59.

[9]) But cf. Conteneau, fig. 59, quite the type of our figure, where also there is a marked tendency to suppress all indication of the hands and feet.

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most clearly archaic (despite its sophisticated elegance) in the treatment of the nose, it may well be assigned to some part of the second millennium B. C.

With the "Peshāwar" specimen above described there were received two fragmentary figures, also in red terracotta and in the same style. One (fig. 3), marked in pencil "Taxila"[1]), is rather crude; there is no indication of a mouth, but chin and nose are run together in a single ridge, giving the face a bird-like look. This seems to be a male figure; a turban is worn, also the channavīra. The marks round the throat may be hair, or necklaces. The second (fig. 4) is quite like the "Peshāwar" figure, but (1) the braids of hair at the back are indicated by three lines of pigment, without any incised lines, (2) the upper edge of the lower eyelid is similarly darkened, and (3) there is no channavīra.

One related fragment (fig. 11), supposedly from Mathurā, in the Museum collection, is in a light grey terracotta. Here the nose is produced in the same way by pinching, but (1) the eyes are incised and diamond-shaped, and show a pupil, (2) the mouth is merely a depression, v-shaped in profile, (3) there is only one necklace, and a garland (cf. later vanamālā) over the shoulders, and (4) the breasts are very prominent and are not subsequently affixed but worked up from the material of the torso. The peculiarities, 1 and 4 have not been previously remarked; the last (4) we shall find to be a constant feature in all the pre-Maurya types remaining to be described.

Another fragment (fig. 13), in light grey terracotta, and supposedly from Mathurā, exhibit the peculiarities (1) and (2) above referred to, viz. the incised diamond eyes with pupils, and the wedge-shaped mouth. The faces, on the other hand, have a decidedly animal, rather pig-like character. The eyebrows are indicated by strokes[2]). A huge earring, like that of the later pre-Mauryan figures, and of some Mesopotamian types, appears for the first time. It is not easy to say what is intended by the punched circles which cover the breast and throat; a figured bodice is possible.

LATER PRE-MAURYA TERRACOTTAS

Group II

The distinguishing characteristics of this group, all in the Museum collection, and stated to be of Mathurā origin, are as follows: (1) the features are adequately represented, with no trace of the pinched up nose, (2) no part of the face or body is separately made and affixed, (3) the hair is parted over the brows, and (4) hangs in heavy braids behind, as in Group I and in later Indian art as far as Amarāvatī, (5) the eyes are oval, and the pupils are indicated, (6) the breasts and hips are enormously developed, and the navel is large and conspicuous, (7) heavy large round earrings are worn, also (8) a girdle (mekhala), bracelets, and anklets,

[1]) Needless tor remark, Peshāwar and Taxila are rather close together, and from a dealer's point of view may be regarded as synonymous. I use the designations "Peshāwar" and "Taxila" here merely for convenience of reference.

[2]) Jastrow, Bildermappe zur Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens, fig. 22.

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and the mount of Venus is concealed by the girdle, although the body is otherwise nude. The face appears to have been pressed in a mould; with one exception (fig. 23), it is represented in full relief, while the rest of the body is modelled. Though flattened from front to back, and intended to be looked at only from the front, the figures are complete sculptures in the round, never mere reliefs. The headdresses are very elaborate, and of two kinds, consisting either of attached stamped rosettes (figs. 5, 6, 18) or developed into two high smooth horns like volutes (figs. 17, 18); these smooth horns like volutes are known also from Harappa and from Pāṭaliputra (fig. 14). There are two distinct facial types. One, apparently the older, is oval, has a strange and rather disturbing loveliness (e. g. fig. 18); the second is broad and rounded, and in expression far less remote (figs. 17, 20). The oval type is unrelated to any known Indian stone sculpture, but the rounded type is not far removed from that of Maurya and early Śuṅga reliefs (Bhājā, Bharhut, Mathurā, cf. figs. 37, 47, 49). All the examples in this group are in a very hard grey clay; a few show a sort of blackish glaze, but no other colouring has been observed. The whole group may be tentatively dated from 1000 to 300 B. C.

Closely related to the above type is a corresponding male form (figs. 21, 22, 33, 39); unfortunately, only one of these (fig. 33) has even a part of the body preserved. The oval facial type is the same, but the beard is indicated by indentations, and in some cases the eyebrows in the same manner; the whole expression is rather more animated. Turbans, as a rule of moderate size, are worn, always with the knot or crest on the left side, a rule that holds good even in the Kuṣāna period, whenever the crest is laterally placed. Several of the male types seem to have snakes coiled round their necks (figs. 22, 33).

Several examples of the female type with the oval face are preserved with complete or nearly complete bodies. In the case of the most perfect (fig. 5) the following additional peculiarities may be remarked: the arms are pointed, without indication of hands, and are inclined downwards but do not touch the hips, notwithstanding these are so much enlarged; the legs also taper, but they are completely separated, and there is no hardly more than a suggestion of feet.

This type is one that occurs in Indian art elsewhere, in small reliefs from varius sites, all certainly pre-Maurya. One of these is the well-known gold leaf plaque (fig. 36) found in a burial mound at Lauriyā-Nandangarh[1]). The type was identified by Bloch as representing the goddess Pṛthvī, the Earth; but as has been remarked by Keith[2]), this suggestion "is wholly unproved and implausible". This Lauriyā plaque may be said to be identical with our terracotta, except that in the plaque the hands and feet are clearly represented. What is

[1]) Bloch, T., Excavations at Lauriya, A. S. I., A. R., 1906—07. A date about the eighth century B. C. has been assigned (Cambridge History of India, I, p. 616). Rather similar gold plaques were found at Piprahwa (Peppé and Smith, in J. R. A. S., 1898; but the reproductions are too crude to admit of serious study).

[2]) Keith, A. B., Religion and philosophy of the Veda, p. 68, note.

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unmistakeably the same figure occurs also on the curious stone discs which have been found at Saṅkīsa[1]) and in the Bhiṛ Mound, Taxila[2]).

In a slightly less complete example (fig. 6) the left arm is bent to support a child at the breast, and just over the place of the navel is a mass that looks someting like an ampulla. Another not illustrated has two attached objects in a similar position, which may be ampullae. But none have the arms folded and the hands on the breasts, as is so usual in western Asiatic types. The most elaborate headdress, of the bicornate type is illustrated in fig. 18; here there are also attached rosettes, and a projecting ornament preserved on one side only. One other, less complete (fig. 17), shows the bicornate headdress even more clearly.

The descriptions above refer primarily to the type with the oval face. The female type with the rounded face is represented by several examples (figs. 19, 20), but none have a body preserved. The headdress in these examples is closely related to that of the Śuṅga types in Group III figs. 24, 34; the hair is dressed in two lateral masses, but neither smooth nor rounded, nor so high on the head as before; and bands of pearls are much in evidence. We have already reached an ethnic type related to that of the early sculptures, such as the Śuṅga head from Mathurā (fig. 37), or that of the railing medallions at Bharhut. Only one of the male heads (fig. 40) can be classed with the rounder female types.

In addition to the two main phases of Group II above described, there are met with numerous special types in the same material. One of these is the donkey head of fig. 12; here the hairy ears are rendered by the attachment of scales of clay. Most likely the rest of the figure was human and female; if so, we should have a form suggestive of the horse-headed Yakṣī, Assamukhi, who appears already in stone reliefs at Bhājā, Pāṭaliputra, Bodhgayā, and Sāñcī, and is without doubt an ancient conception. Another type is that of the "demon" heads (figs. 9, 10). One at least of these has a striking resemblance to similar heads of Mesopotamian origin[3]) and I suspect that here too we have to do with friendly and guardian demons, rather than with devils. The one example (fig. 10) in which the body is partly preserved holds a broad club under his right arm (scarcely visible in the reproduction); this would give him a right to the epithet mudgara-pāṇi, and perhaps it is worth while to mention that later on we actually meet with a Yakṣa by name Mudgarapāṇi[4]). Another demon head, with an enormous mouth, is still related to our general type in respect of the shape of the eyes (fig. 9).

To be connected with the present group is a remarkable series of terra-

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[1]) Cunningham, A. S. Reports, Vol. XI, p. 29 and Pl. IX; H. I. I. A., fig. 34.

[2]) A. S. I., A. R., 1920—21, p. 21 and Pl. XVII, 29, 30. Here the figure is seated and the hair suggests a wig. It is just possible that the curious copper object, apparently with arms and legs, found at Fatehgarh, U. P. (Cambridge History of India, fig. 17) should be associated with the same types.

[3]) E. g., Jastrow, Bildermappe . . ., figs. 65, 66; Schäfer-Andrae, Die Kunst des alten Orients, fig. 546.

[4]) See my Yakṣas, Washington, 1928, p. 21.

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cottas excavated at Pāṭaliputra (figs. 14, 16, 51); they were all found in the dark blue soil enveloping the ancient wooden rampart, and "their extreme antiquity is manifest"[1]). The types include two very fully clothed female figures, one a relief (exceptional at this time), the other (fig. 51) enitrely built up of separate parts put together before firing; and two youthful heads, one (fig. 14) with the bicornate headdress, of which the points are apparently terminated by tassels, the other (fig. 16) a smiling child, which is one of the most sensitive and skilful productions of Indian art at any period. Despite the great refinement of this last example, its facial type is not far removed from that of the roundfaced type already described, and there is no reason to regard it as of later than Maurya or pre-Maurya date. Two heads in the museum collection (fig. 15 and one other) seem to be of the same kind.

Group III

The general facies presented by the terracottas is much changed when we come to the Śuṅga period (ca. 175—73 B. C.). The nude goddess is no longer met with[2]), and on the technical side we find that completely moulded plaques replace the modelled figurine. The body is never built up of separate parts, nor does this method ever again recur (it survives however in the making of wax models for the casting of bronzes by the cire perdue process, in some provincial styles). The most characteristic type is a feminine divinity, fully clothed in a tunic and dhotī; but despite the clothing, particular care is taken, as is also the case in much of the Śuṅga and early Kuṣāna stone sculpture, to show the details of the sex very clearly[3]). The jewelled girdle remains a constant feature; but the types as a whole are more varied, as will be seen by a reference to the figures 24—26, etc. It is curious to find a resort to the use of moulds thus late in the history of the terracotta style; but on the other hand the technical accomplishment is often admirable, and in the power to suggest movement and grace there has been a really great advance (fig. 50). The features and headdress retain practically the form and detail of the round-faced variety of the previous group. The turbous are larger.

The nearly complete example, fig. 24 illustrates most of these points. Here at one side we find an emblem consisting of two fish, with a third of which only the head is preserved; a pair of fish is a common auspicious symbol in later, especially in Jaina art, where it forms one of the aṣṭamaṅgala, but I cannot

[1]) See A. S. I., A. R., 1915—16, Pt. I, p. 14 and do. 1917—18, Pt. I, p. 27 and Pl. XVI.

[2]) But it should be noted that a nude goddess in bone has been found at Sirkap (Indo-Greek, Scytho-Parthian, or early Kuṣāna period): see A. S. I., A. R. 1915—16, Pl. IX, 2. Here Fig. 38.

[3]) As in the Aegean, so in India, we have to do with feminine divinities who may or may not be represented with clothing, other than jewellery; when without clothing, perhaps the magical efficacy of the divine body was felt to act more freely, and perhaps the clothing itself might have been thought to conserve it. But even when clothing is present (I do not believe that many, if any, of the Mathurā railing pillars are really nude) the sexual parts are clearly shown, as if to emphasize the sourse of fruitfulness: Cf. Conteneau, fig. 42.

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say what their significance here may be. This example is further remarkable in having preserved beside the left shoulder, a short inscription in Brāhmī characters, reading apparently Sudhaṭa, presumably the name of the personage represented; there are also traces of letters in a corresponding position on the proper right. In another variety (fig. 26) the right arm of the main figure seems to caress the head of a small and slender girl, who wears a girdle and apprently a dhotī, but is nude from the waist up, and holds some object in her right hand; in the corresponding position on the other side of the plaque is what looks like a crouching lion. In a much later example (fig. 41) the main figure is accompanied by a dwarfish ithyphallic male. The interesting winged type of fig. 25 is very rare, only one other example, a fragment, being known[1]). It will be remarked that this divinity (as also in the case of fig. 50) stands on a lotus, and these are amongst the earliest known examples of the lotus pedestal in Indian art. This association is suggestive of the goddess Śrī, or Fortune, whose cult seems to have been popular at an early period[2]). We possess, indeed, one terracotta example (fig. 30) representing the well-known type called the Lustration (abhiṣeka) of Śrī; here the standing figure is flanked by the tall stems of lotus flowers, which serve to support a pair of elephants (i. e. clonds), holding in their trunks inverted jars from which streams of water (i. e. rain) are poured upon the goddess[3]). This common motif, in the special case of Buddhist art at Bharhut and Sāñcī has been interpreted as symbolising the Nativity of the Buddha; but inasmuch as the type is common to Buddhist, Jaina, and later Hindu art, and occurs also on coins which we have no special reason to consider as Buddhist, the special interpretation is implausible.

Some other Śuṅga types are illustrated here as being of anthropological more the artistic interest. One rather common form is that of a dwarf male, with a rather large belly, bent knees, and conspicuous genitals (fig. 44); one is reminded of the faience images of the Egyptian divinity Bes. Examples of this type, other than those in the Museum collection, have been found at Basāṛh[4]). To be associated with this type is a single female relief, having the hands clasped below the breasts, and the mount of Venus very conspicuously exhibited (fig. 43).

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[1]) A bronze winged goddess has been found at Akhun Dheri (? early Kuṣāna) A. S. I., A. R., 1922—23, Pl. X, b. Another female winged type, occurring in a stone relief from Mathurā, of perhaps the first century A. D., is illustrated in Smith, Jaina stupa of Mathura, Pl. XVIII.

[2]) Śrī is first mentioned in literature in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, xi, 4, 3, 1, and subsequently in the Sūtra literature. She is represented in a variety of forms, all associated with the lotus, at Bharhut, Sāñcī, Bodhgayā, Mānmoḍa, Nadsūr, and in the Jaina Ananta Gumphā, on coins of Azes and Azilises, and in the round from Mathurā (H. I. I. A., fig. 74). Most numismatists have very rightly retained the designation "Lakṣmī"; so also Keith, loc. cit., p. 212, and my Early Indian Iconography, II. Śrī-Lakṣmī, Eastern art, Part. 3, 1929.

[3]) Some other terracotta examples of the Gaja-Lakṣmī type are reported by Cunningham from Saṅkīsa, A. S. Reports, XI, p. 29.

[4]) Spooner, D. B., in A. S. I., A. R., 1913—14, pl. XLV, c. Cf. the ithyphallic dwarf type with bent knees on Babylonian cylinders, Conteneau, figs. 8, 24, 25, etc.

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From these types it is natural to proceed to the "productive pairs" (mithuna)[1] of figs. 27, 32, 35, 45; on the one hand these represent a type very constantly presented in Indian stone sculpture from the Pāṭaliputra railing onwards, and on the other, often suggest the familiar groups of Śiva and Pārvatī. The figures are generally fully clothed, but in some cases (fig. 27) the sexual organs are seen; in any case, an affectionate relation is usually indicated. When in some phases of later Indian art, as in the well-known examples of the Sūrya Deul, Koṇārak, we meet with similar pairs represented as engaged in intercourse, some light may be thrown on their original significance by the fact that ritual sexual intercourse was once practised in connection with the Mahāvrata ceremony "when the strengthening of the sun was an essential duty"[2].

One other type of considerable interest is represented by two examples which are probably later in date than any so far described (figs. 42, 46); one of these is a curious seated figure, holding a bird that looks like an owl[3], while the other, supporting in his arms a ram, has a large belly, and a "demon" face like those already described[4]. I take this last form to be a bucolic deity, perhaps a guardian of flocks and herds, a kind of "good shepherd".

THE NUDE GODDESS.

Whom then does the Indian nude goddess represent? We know that a nude and steatopygous type occurs throughout the most ancient world, from Central Europe in neolithic times to the Ganges valley. The general significance has been admirably summarised by Glotz for the Aegean as follows: "She is the Great Mother. It is she who makes all nature bring forth. All existing things are emanations from her. She is the madonna, carrying the holy child or watching over him. She is the mother of men, and of animals, too. She continually appears with an escort of beasts, for she is the mistress of wild animals, snakes, birds, and fishes. She even makes the plants grow by her universal fecundity . . . perpetuating the vegetative force of which she is the fountain head"[5].

Such a goddess is known in western Asia, where the nearest cognates of ancient Indian culture are found, by such names as Anahita and Ishtar; and as Dr. Barnett has already suggested, we may say that in India such images as those of the later mother-goddesses and Tārā point back to an age when Anahita, known by that or by some other name, was worshipped alike in western Asia and Indus Valley India[6]. The Indian goddess Aditi has much in common with

[1] The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, X, 5, 2, 8, informs us that "mithuna means a productive couple". Cf. Gangoly, O. C., The Mithuna in Indian art, Rūpam, 22—23, 1925.

[2] Keith, A. B., Religion and philosophy of the Veda, p. 351.

[3] The owl is associated with evil spirits in the Vedas (Keith, loc. cit., p. 193). But the Garuḍa is represented in much the same way in early Indian art, and it is doubtful what bird is really intended.

[4] For the facial type cf. a seated figure from the Bhir mound, Taxila, A. S. I., A. R., 1919—20, Pl. XVI, 3; also the "demons of darkness" of the Bhājā vihāra verandah reliefs.

[5] Glotz, Aegean civilisation, p. 245.

[6] J. R. A. S., 1926, p. 765.

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the Babylonian Ishtar, and on the other hand with Śrī-Lakṣmī: on each case either in the literature or in the actual iconography, or in both, great stress is laid on the milk-giving quality of the goddess, who is sometimes compared to a cow. We can safely assert that the Indian nude goddess was a goddess of fertility, for this is written unmistakeably upon her image; that she was a popular and perhaps a household goddess; that she was one of, and perhaps the greatest of the many non-Aryan feminine divinities who later on were gradually and only with difficulty merged in the Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheons as Śaktis; and that she is in the last analysis identical with the Great Mother, the Supreme Devī of the Tantras. Not all the religious development, nor the successive waves of alien ethnic influences of three millenniums have sufficed to eradicate or even materially weaken the indigenous concept of the supreme deity as a feminine power.

We cannot, of course, with any security attach a name to the Indian nude goddess. The only extant literature dating back to the second millennium B. C. is Aryan; and in the Vedas, goddesses, with the exception perhaps of Aditi play a very insignificant role. Nevertheless, numerous feminine divinities are incidentally mentioned, especially in the later books and in the Sūtra literature, where the incorporation of popular religious practises into sanctioned ritual can be traced; and a brief consideration of some of these will prove at least suggestive[1]).

Thus, besides Aditi, the mild, ruling this world, the heavenly of the quarters, mother of the Ādityas, a personification of Nature, and sometimes identified with the Earth, we have: Rakā, who is rich and bountiful; Sinīvalī, a sister of the gods, with broad hips, who is begged to give children; Anumatī, besought to be propitious and to grant long life [in this connection it may be added that the Atharva Veda, VI, 133 cites the sacred girdle (mekhala), which we have seen so constantly worn by the nude goddess, as being a long-life (āyusyam) charm[2])]; Puraṁdhī (= Avestan Pārendi) is a goddess of plenty and abundance. Finally, not to make the list exhaustive, we have Vāśinī, the "ruling goddess" mentioned in various Gṛhya Sūtras[3]); "she is probably the mother-goddess who despite all Vedic influences always was the chief spiritual village power identified with Śiva's wife in various forms"[4]). It is rather with this last mentioned divinity or with Aditi that an identification might be made, if any were ventured; though all these goddesses, as well as Śrī (to be referred to subsequently), are maternal powers of abundance. The suggestion of Śiva's wife is also significant; for "it is tempting to see in Umā a form of the mother-goddess of the Dravidians"[5]).

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[1]) See, for some of these, Keith, A. B., Religion and Philosophy of the Veda, pp. 197—200, 211—213, etc.

[2]) In Jātakas Nos. 442, 539, Maṇimekhalā is the name of a goddess.

[3]) E. g., Hiraṇyakeśin, Gṛhya Sūtra, I, 2, 6, 5. The Sutras also mention images.

[4]) Hopkins, E. W., in Cambridge History of India, p. 238.

[5]) Keith, loc. cit., p. 200.

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Even the Babylonian types exhibit features which in India would be regarded as suggestive of Śiva and his consort; thus the nude goddess sometimes stands on a bull which is the emblem of a male deity; and Ishtar, who is either originally one with, or is later identified with the nude goddess has for her emblem a lion, and is generally represented as a warrior goddess, having amongst other arms, sheafs of arrows rising above each shoulder (curiously suggestive of some later Indian forms of Durgā); but these interesting analogies should not be pressed too far in detail, however suggestive they may be in principle. It may be added that the snakes about the necks of the male heads corresponding to the nude goddess type of Group II are also suggestive of Śiva.

The characteristic type in Group III would seemingly represent a different personality, one of a less chthonic and more familiar sort. An identification of some of the forms, at least, with Śrī, has already been suggested, and may perhaps, be adopted with confidence wherever the lotus is in evidence. Śrī is first definitely mentioned in literature in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, then in the Sūtra literature, where offerings are made to her by the bed (as goddess of love and fertility); but she is an important popular deity whose appearance in literature is probably long posterior to her first cult[1]). In later, Paurāṇik, texts she becomes as Lakṣmī the wife of Viṣṇu, and is born from the waters at the Churning of the Ocean; the Gaja-Lakṣmī (abhiṣeka) formula retaining a great vogue in sculpture and painting up to the present day. A composition so special as this, remaining in use during fully twenty-one centuries, we may well suppose to have been older than the earliest extant examples, and the fact that some, and only some, of these are found in a Buddhist association does not entitle us to place an originally Buddhist interpretation on the theme.

STYLISTIC AND CULTURAL SEQUENCE

The various archaic terracottas here considered, scanty as the record may be, carry back the history of sculpture in India certainly for a millennium, perhaps for two or three millenniums, beyond the time of the earliest figures in stone; and these, it may be remarked, are freestanding figures, like the early terracottas. We can, of course feel sure that a use of relief in wood carving must have long antedated the early stone figures in question; but even so it is a little surprising to find that so far as the terracottas are concerned, the completely modelled figure comes first, then figures with a moulded face, and finally the completely moulded relief plaque; it is the reverse of what might have been expected and of what actually occurs in Babylonia[2]). In other words, the treatment is progressively flattened. And despite the greater refinement, and often high degree of technical perfection of the Śuṅga plaques[6]), it is undeniable

[1]) Keith, loc. cit., p. 212; and my Early Indian Iconography, II, Śrī-Lakṣmī, already cited.
[2]) Contenau, p. 51.
[3]) E. g. the Bhīṭā plaque, Cambridge History of India, Fig. 81.

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that the terracottas of the second group represent a more powerful and expressive phase of art. The terracotta style declines further in the Kuṣāna period, but revives in more refined forms in the Gupta time. It would almost seem as though one ancient stylistic cycle was coming to its end about the third century B. C.; and that the great figures of the primitive stone Yakṣas represent the beginning of a cycle with which we are more familiar. This would further correspond to what we otherwise know of the cultural development; for despite inevitable and conspicuous continuities, India before the Upaniṣads and Buddhism, is almost another world than the India of the theistic age. Before, we have to do with Brahmanism on the one hand, indigenous cults and mysticism on the other; afterwards, with a Hinduism created out of both sources.

It is highly significant that later terracottas can be more and more closely linked with the lithic sculpture as we approach the Śuṅga period, both as regards the details of the costume, and in the themes, and still more clearly in the physical types. For needless to remark, the physical type always reflects a current and racial conception of beauty. It has already been remarked with justice that the conception of female beauty in early Indian (lithic) art is Dravidian rather than Aryan, and that in essentials it may be said to represent the taste of the stone age: „Das weibliche Schönheitsideal der indischen Kunst, mit seinen überaus betonten Formen, hat in der Kunst der ganzen Welt keine bessere Schwester als die paläolithische Venus von Willendorf. . . . Es ist zweifellos ein vorarisches Ideal körperlicher Vollendung zu einer Schönheit, die gleichbedeutend mit Fruchtbarkeit ist"[1]). One should not consider such ideals to be of a purely material and physical significance; as remarked by Zimmer „die äußere Erscheinung ist dem Inder ein getreuer Spiegel seelischer Struktur"[2]), and even the latest Śākta devotional hymns, in which the goddess is glorified as the supreme spiritual power, continue to describe in glowing terms her exuberant physical charms[3]).

These observations may be well illustrated by a comparison of fig. 5 (the nude goddess) with fig. 47 (Sirimā Devatā, "the goddess Mother Śrī", from Bharhut, or of fig. 24 ("Sudhaṭa") with fig. 49 (a pillar figure from Rājasan, of Śuṅga date). They serve to emphasize that none of the examples illustrated, nor any of the later voluptuous types of Indian religious art, are to be regarded as erotic works in the modern or European sense. The consciousness of the identity of beauty and fruitfulness has never been lost in India, and this is why even the most spiritual types so long preserved their volume and vitality. A really profound cultural achievement expressed in art is not so much to be found in the rendering of spiritual ideas by ascetic representations, as in the use of terms of warm and sensuous form, for so only can the unity of spirit and matter, and not the warfare of spirit and matter, be realised. All this, of

[1]) Kramrisch, S., Grundzüge der indischen Kunst, pp. 29, 30, with reference to the Bharhut relief, Fig. 4.

[2]) Zimmer, Kunstform und Yoga, p. 158.

[3]) Avalon, Hymns to the Goddess, passim.

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course, is parallel to what can be traced in the literature; but it is not without significance that here too in primitive works of art that take us back to very simple, archaic and popular modes of thought, the material of the later intuitions lies already to hand. The double continuity of Indian culture, on the one hand historical, on the other traceable from the lowest to the highest phases of existing belief, is nowhere better illustrated. Important for the history of art, and technically interesting as the terracottas may be, it should not be overlooked that they are also documents of life.

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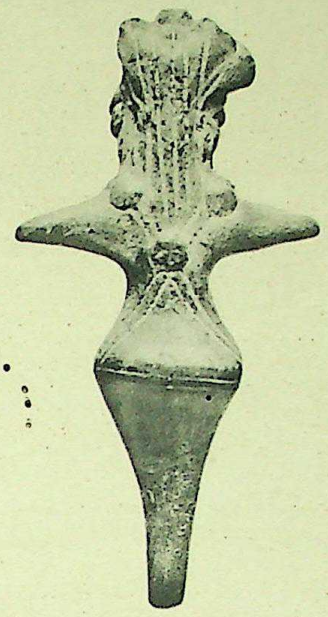

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Indian Terracottas

Coomaraswamy, Archaic Indian Terracottas

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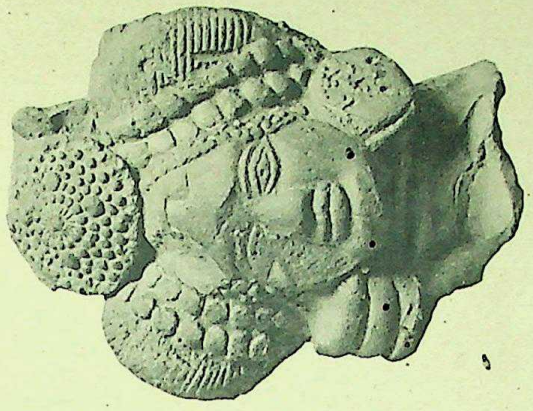

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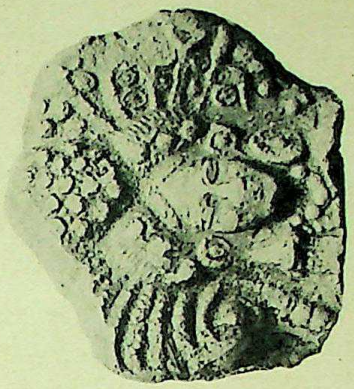

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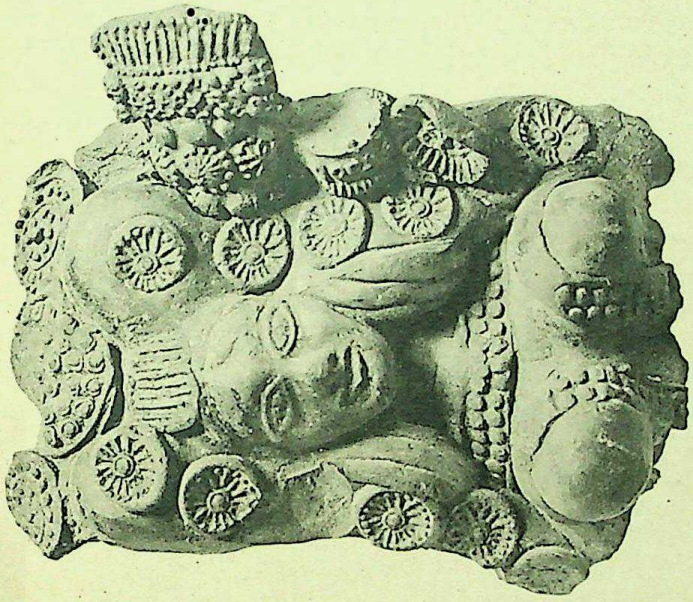

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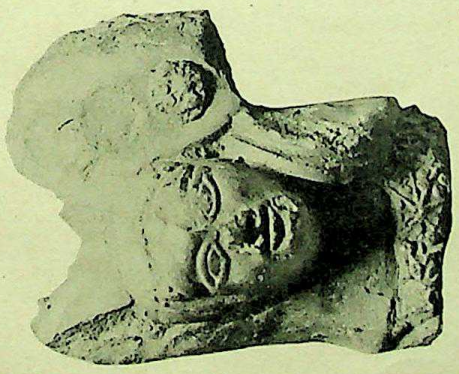

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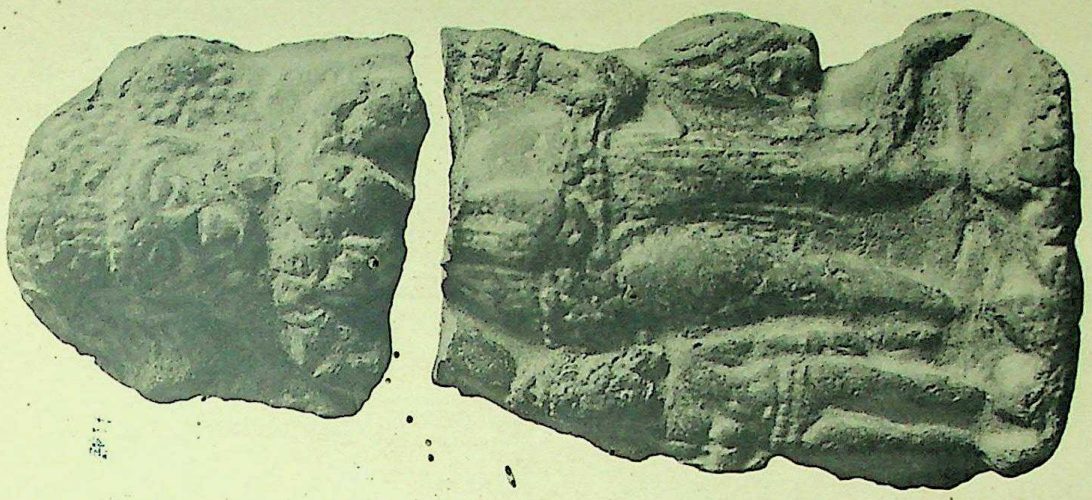

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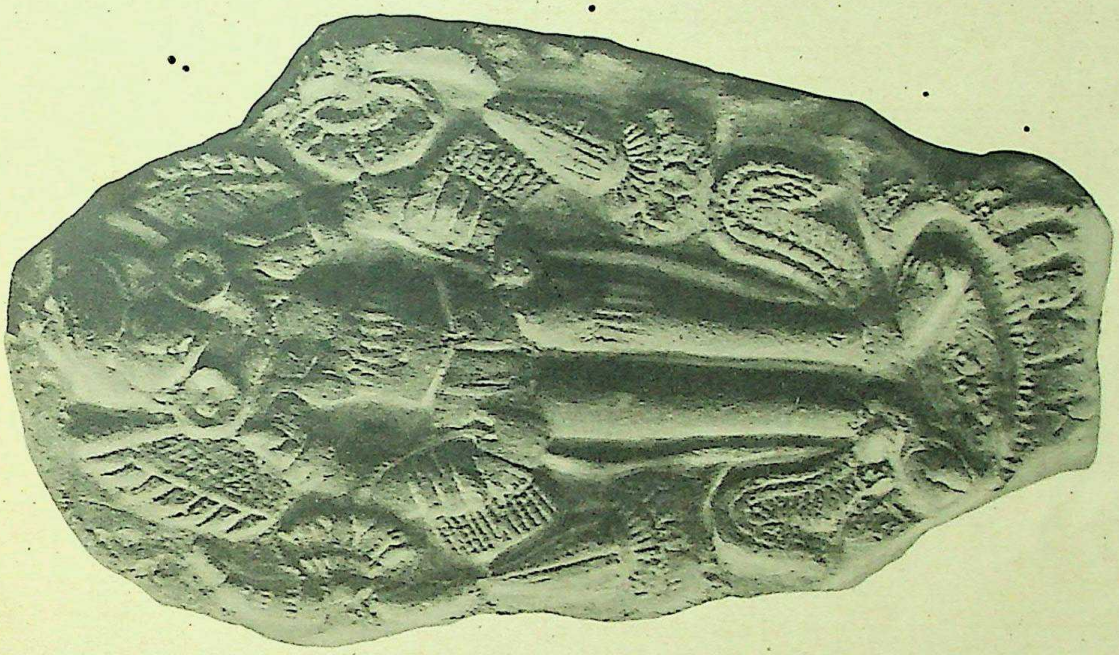

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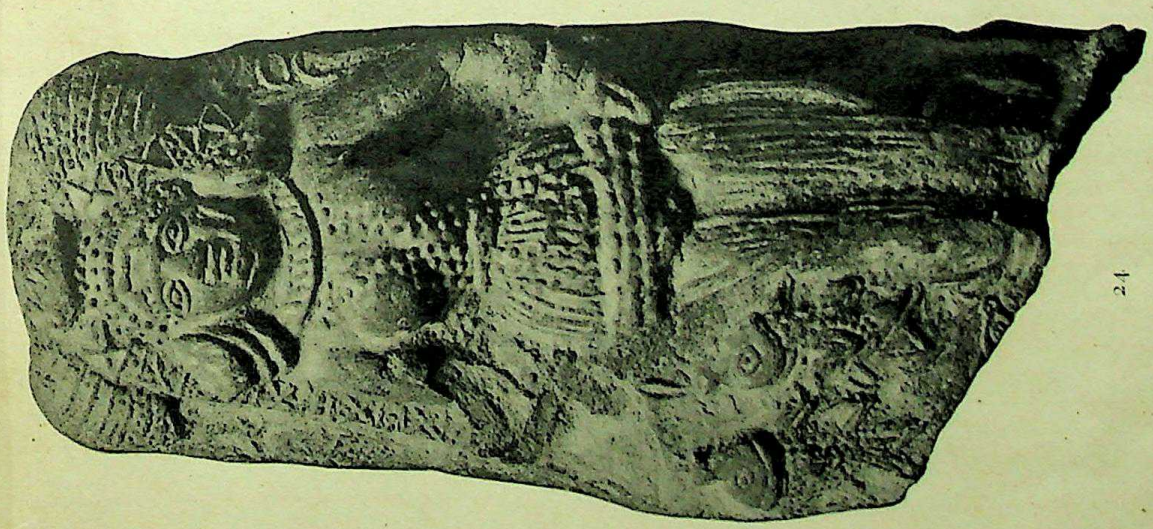

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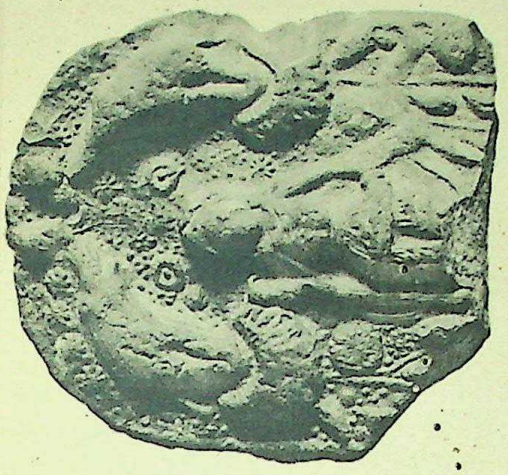

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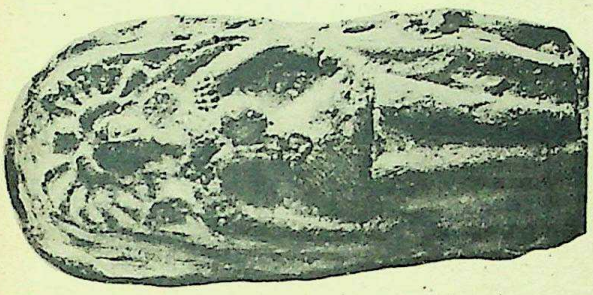

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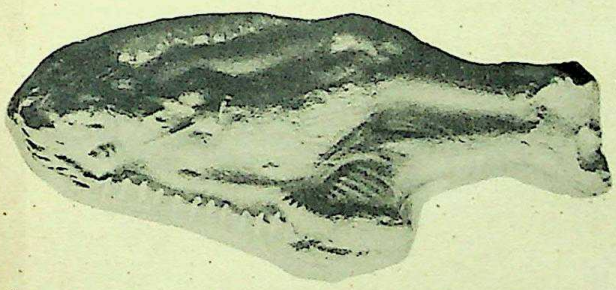

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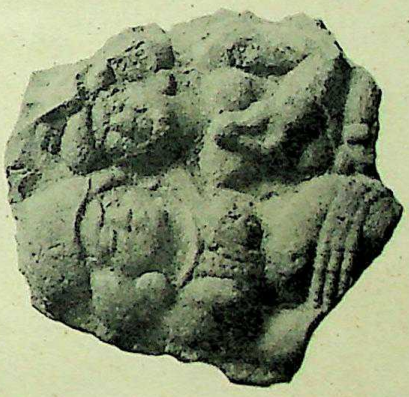

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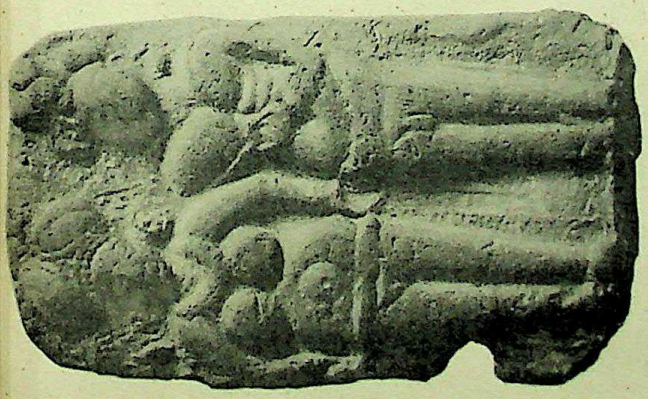

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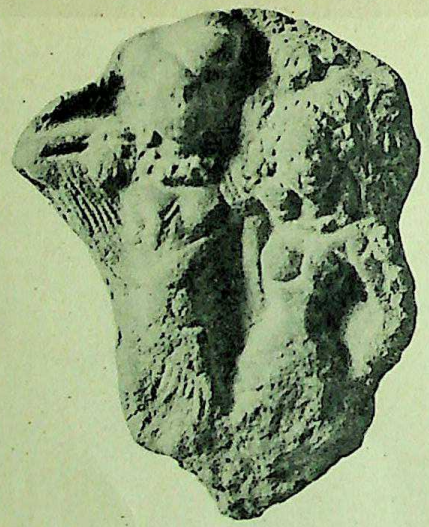

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Indian Terracottas (except 36, gold; 37, stone; 38, bone)

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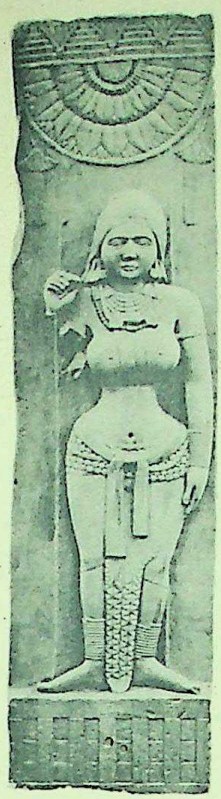

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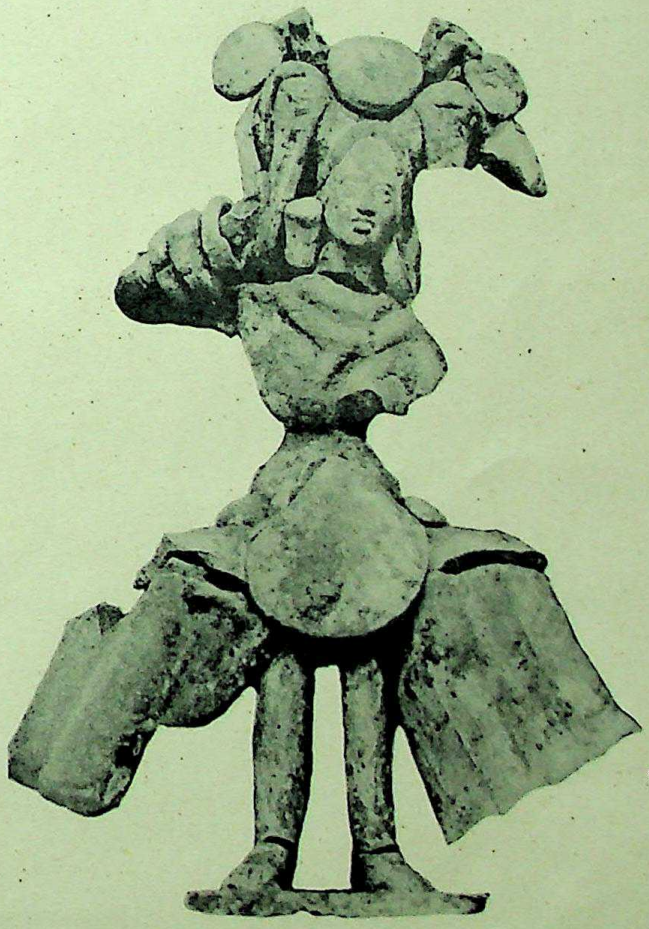

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Indian Terracottas (50, 51), and stone (47—49)

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